

DISCUSSION BULLETIN

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Address all correspondence to
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BULLETIN MATTERS

In this issue we conclude the Discussion Bulletin publication of the proposal by the Guildford Branch of the SPGB to make what amounts to an about face in the SPGB program. Adam Buick, a frequent writer in the DB, responds to the proposal in a well-reasoned article. It's interesting to note the tone of the response. The SPGB apparently handles what might be considered heretics in a much more rational manner than some parties I can think of.



Also, Tom Wetzel, coordinator of IDEAS & ACTION, the Workers' Solidarity Alliance publication, answers recent letters by Jeff Stein and Jon Bekken, IWW members and WSA critics. Laurens Otter writes from England on the same topic. Monroe Prussack has three letters in this issue, dealing with the SLP, DeLeonism, and the Soviet Union. In another letter Comrade Otter comments on the DB's review of CLASS WAR ON THE HOME FRONT and provides new information on the Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation and its members. Rik Winslow writes on the frustrations that beset an active revolutionary when the working class is not revolutionary. The last item, a broadside from the Spanish Information Network is included for information purposes, since the events it discusses have passed. Additional information will be included under "Publications Received." As ever, we need your articles and letters for DB29. Remember, please, single-space, a dark ribbon, and narrow [3/4th-inch] margins. A seven-inch typed line is ideal.

Frank Girard
for the DB Committee

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

LENINISM OR COMMUNISM by Jean Barrot, Published by Wildcat Group, No date [1987], 16 pages plus wraps, order from Box N, c/o Raven, 75 Picadilly, Manchester, M1 2BU, England.

In two essays, "The 'Renegade' Kautsky and His Disciple Lenin" and "The True Role of Bolshevism" Barrot finds the sources of modern Leninist vanguardism in pre-WWI social democracy and especially Kautsky's theoretical contribution to it. No price given--perhaps \$2.

SINEWS (Number 8, November, 1987) \$3 per year from 37 South Terrace, Esh Winning, Co. Durham, England DH7 9PS.

SINEWS appears to be an English-language support publication for the CNT-U, a split-off from the Spanish CNT, which is recognized by the International Workers Association, the syndicalist international. SINEWS may have been instrumental in having a large packet of materials on the Vitoria Six sent to the DB. This included two large, impressive posters and several copies of a six-page English language brochure supporting the six CNT-U members in Vitoria whose activism in various strikes resulted in their arrest. Copies of this brochure are available from DB on a first-come, first-served basis.

THE ARROGANCE OF UNCONTESTED POWER by Laurens Otter, Wrekin Libertarians, College Farmhouse, Wellington, Salop., England, 1988, 28 pages.

This pamphlet is an exposition of the tendency of political states to operate their military, police, and intelligence branches outside their own laws. Comrade Otter comments on the Spycatcher case and recounts an incident in which he was involved.

From a source which evidently preferred to remain anonymous the DB recently received a copy of a rather large book on the strategies capitalists can use to resist unionization. This is a sort of do-it-yourself book complete with leaflets to copy and such items as a

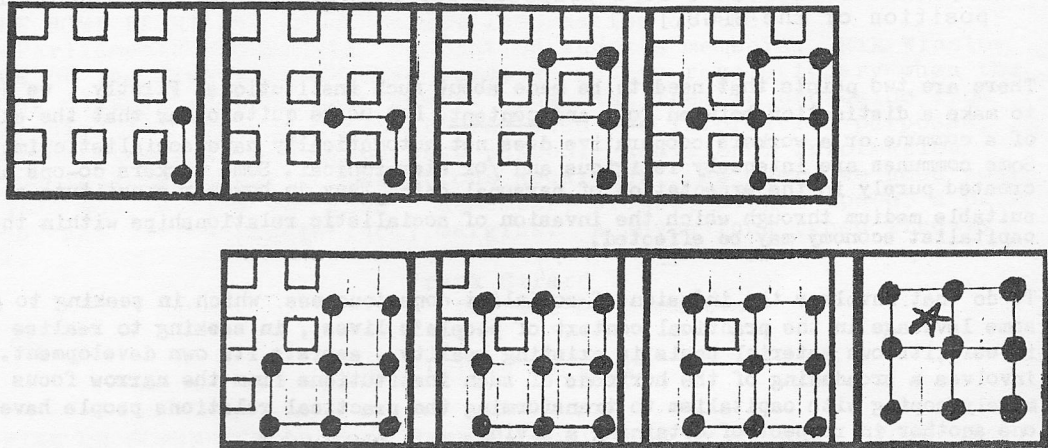
Cont'd on p. 15

[Below is the conclusion of "an alternative model of social evolution" proposed to the Socialist Party of Great Britain (SPGB) by its Guildford Branch. The branch, which sent the DB a copy, emphasized that this is a proposal for consideration, not the official position of the SPGB.]

39. There are two points that need to be made about such institutions. Firstly, we need to make a distinction between form and content. Let us be quite clear that the existence of a commune or a workers cooperative does not automatically have socialistic implications. Some communes are intensely religious and /or hierarchical. Some workers co-ops are created purely in the expectation of personal gain. They do however constitute a suitable medium through which the invasion of socialistic relationships within the capitalist economy may be effected.
40. To do that involves ~~an~~ infusion of socialist consciousness, which, in seeking to gain some leverage in the practical context of people's lives, in seeking to realise as it were, its own material basis in existing reality, assists its own development. It involves a broadening of the horizons of such institutions from the narrow focus of merely coping with capitalism to transforming the practical relations people have with one another in respect of obtaining a living.
41. Secondly, how are these practical relations to be transformed? We may expect the growth of socialist consciousness to be reflected in changes to the internal structure of such institutions. Gradually over time we can expect to see them progressively gutted of their capitalist content. The corollary of this will be the increasing application of socialist principles in respect of production and consumption. In a way, this is already evident in the example of the ordinary household mentioned earlier in which relations between members of the household are direct and unmediated. Similar social relations must develop on a world wide scale before the "free access" of socialism becomes credible.
42. It is of course quite true that such institutions could not exist in a fully autonomous sense. They would be dependant in varying degrees upon outside contacts and to that extent would be locked into the nexus of capitalist relations even if internally they may strive to conduct their affairs in an unmediated fashion. We may expect however that with the growth of the socialist movement and the proliferation of such institutions that increasingly these external contacts will be with other such institutions and will take the form of mutual support with a corresponding decline in dependence on capitalist suppliers and markets. Indeed, this growing interaction will be the key to, and will go hand in hand with, internal changes to the structure of such institutions.
43. To survive and grow they must support each other to reach a "critical mass", a secure foundation upon which they will be able to hold out clear psychological and eventually material advantages over the typical capitalist enterprise. They will not succeed if they aim only for self satisfaction in mutual isolation. They therefore must, be geared to growth and the conscious aim of evolving towards a totally socialist society.

44. We can demonstrate this invasion of socialistic relationship within capitalism in diagram form

A POSSIBLE MODEL FOR SOCIAL EVOLUTION



Elements of the market economy (=□) are gradually replaced by autonomous enterprises (=●) until the market sector is reduced to a size that can be socialised by "enactment" without causing widespread social disruption.

15. These socialistic institutions will be a transitional stage to socialism, developing insofar as they can demonstrate a better life to workers trapped in the remaining units of capitalism. This is important because until the idea of free production can be seen to work in practice, socialism will not seem to be a practical proposition. These socialistic institutions will not constitute a worldwide society until every capitalist unit has disappeared. Not all of these are likely to disappear as a result of the collapse of markets precipitated by the invasion of socialistic relationships. In the case of the more firmly entrenched and technically complex capitalist units it will be necessary to bring into play the complementary method of capturing state power in order to legitimise social ownership of these units. This however, will be far removed from the Big Bang scenario envisaged in Party literature. The scale of the task such a method would be required to accomplish would be greatly reduced by the considerable inroads already achieved through the growth of socialistic relationships

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PARTY

46. The implications for the Party of what is being proposed here are both practical and theoretical. Let us consider the former first.
47. If socialism is inconceivable without this tendency for it to be prefigured in concrete forms within the revolutionary process itself, then arguably as socialists we should be

encouraging, even participating in, the development of such forms as with unions. A drawback of the socialist case to many of our critics is that nowhere has it ever been put into practice. To some extent, their appearance on the scene - and even more so, the rapid growth of such forms - will help to erode this type of objection. And as we must get a living somehow in capitalism we could do a lot worse than to seek it in alternative forms of living and producing that strain against the capitalist ethos as surely as they give strength to our socialist resolve. This is not, of course, to be seen as an alternative to Party work. We repeat, such enclaves will not automatically pave the way to a socialist future. The need for a political organisation putting forward the uncompromising case for socialism is paramount and as pressing as ever.

48. As for the Party itself, what could it do to facilitate this development? No one is pretending that there are not considerable difficulties that would need to be ironed out if, as we hope it will, the Party chose to play a more active role in doing this. For the present however, we would like to float a few suggestions of our own and encourage members to add to this list any further suggestions they may think of.
49. Firstly the Party could take the initiative in setting up a cooperative itself. The most obvious example that comes to mind and probably the most practical under present circumstances, is a publishing cooperative to which the Party could lease facilities on agreed terms. Such a cooperative would of course need to take in outside work to be sustainable at the present time. Another type of cooperative which it is worth thinking about for the future is a research institute. Each of these types of co-ops would engage in a closely knit symbiotic relationship with each other and the Party organisation itself which would benefit immensely from such cooperation. Moreover for socialists participating in such ventures, the Party would assume a much more vital significance in their lives.
50. A second form of practical activity in which the Party could engage is to act as a sort of clearing house or agency for cooperative and communal initiatives by members themselves.
51. Thirdly, the Party could approach existing co-ops and communities in a practical and constructive way with a view to encouraging a broader outlook in line with what was earlier discussed.
52. Of course, it may well be the case that the emergence of socialistic relationships we envisage may still be a long way off. As was earlier suggested: a qualitative change in the institutional forms mentioned is likely to be associated with a quantitative increase in such forms coupled with the infusion of socialist consciousness within them. Nevertheless, this should not prevent us from taking whatever steps we can to assist this process.
53. In the short term, however, the main advantage to the Party in adopting this scenario is that our theory of revolution will come to be seen as very much more credible. Whether we may agree with this scenario or not, it is quite clear that the big bang scenario of socialist revolution as traditionally conveyed in Party literature, is out of the question for the reasons given.
54. It has been suggested that what is being proposed in this circular is not new, that Party members speculating among themselves about what would happen prior to the so called enactment of socialism, have come to conclusions not dissimilar to ours. For our part, we are pleased to hear this. Indeed, it has also been pointed out that even in what the Party has officially published are to be found arguments that support what has been presented here. Thus in the May 1966 Socialist Standard we find the following statement:
 "It is completely illogical to imagine that socialist understanding could grow to the point of political victory without simultaneously resulting in a growth of understanding and hence organisation to prepare for the taking over of industry. The Socialist Party in fact knows full well that organisation is necessary for

the running of industry in the new-born Socialist Society. It holds that a sizeable spread of political clear-sightedness will lead to the growth of such organisations, for when many workers want Socialism they will begin to organise and plan for the rebuilding of society prior to the capture of political power" (our emphasis)

55. This statement however is ambiguous and we are bound to point out that what we are talking about is not so much "preparing" for a socialist future by advance planning, but a change in economic relationships between people prior to the formal enactment of socialism
56. Accepting, however, that the sort of ideas that have been discussed in this circular have also been discussed over many years by Party members, we feel that there can be no justification for continuing with the situation as it present stands in which we find ourselves on the one hand, hamstrung by a theory which we publicly espouse, and on the other, reassured by another theory which we privately endorse. It is time that we brought the former into line with the latter if we do indeed find the latter more compelling and credible.

CONCLUSION

57. We cannot pretend that as a branch we have all the answers to the very important issues raised in this circular. There is a lot that still has to be thought through. That is why we would welcome a dialogue with other members and would be pleased to receive constructive criticism which ought also to be made available to others as well. To facilitate this we have numbered the paragraphs in this circular. Furthermore, we would like to suggest that an ad hoc committee be set up along the lines of the Production for Use committee to thoroughly investigate this whole subject. We urge branches to support the call for such a committee to be set up.
58. In any event, we urge that members give the ideas contained in this circular, serious and thoughtful consideration. We should not flinch from making any necessary adjustments to the corpus of Party theory if we do indeed come to see this as unavoidable and vital to our future prospects. There can be nothing more corrosive of the revolutionary outlook than dogmatism. For a revolutionary whose very lifeblood is change, to succumb to a hardening of the categories, would be to fall victim to a disease whose outcome is fatal.

Guildford Branch

October 1987

SUGGESTED READING

- Andre Gorz- Ecology as Politics (1980)
Farewell to the Working Class (1983)
Paths to Paradise : on the Liberation from Work (1985)
- Alvin Toffler- The Third Wave (1980)
Previews and Premises (1984)
- James Robertson- The Sane Alternative (1978)
- Tom Stonier- The Wealth of Information (1983)
- Charles Handy- The Future of Work (1984)

WHICH WAY TO SOCIALISM: DECISIVE BREAK OR GRADUAL EVOLUTION?

1. In the covering note to their circular on "The Road to Socialism" Guildford reject what they call "the traditional theory of socialist revolution" in favour of "an alternative model of social evolution". A reading of their circular confirms that this contrast between "evolution" and "revolution" is not accidental: they really do reject the idea that the establishment of socialism can only come after a decisive break, a rupture, with capitalism (revolution) in favour of the idea that socialism can evolve within and gradually replace capitalism (gradualism).

2. The "decisive break", in traditional theory, is of course the capture of political power by a socialist-minded working class majority. This has been seen as a necessary precondition for the reorganisation of society on a socialist basis for a number of reasons. First, because socialism cannot be established until and unless a majority want and understand it. Second, to prevent political power being used by the supporters of capitalism to disrupt the establishment of socialism, and to generally allow socialism to be established in as orderly and coordinated a way as possible. Third, because the economic laws of capitalism --the iron law of profit and the coercive laws of competition-- rule out anything constructive being done within capitalism.

3. Guildford raise the question of what is likely to happen at a time when there will be a substantial minority but not yet a majority in favour of socialism, i.e. at a time when it is not yet possible to establish socialism.

4. The traditional position on this has been to say that once socialist ideas begin to spread on a wide scale this will express itself not just in growing membership and growing electoral support for the socialist political organisation, but also in the transformation of other working class organisations and in particular of the trade unions: they will become socialist organisations working for socialism alongside the socialist political party. Workers will begin drawing up plans as to how to run their workplaces, whether factory, hospital, school, office or whatever, and the whole sector in which they work when once a sufficient majority to abolish capitalism will have been won over. It can also be imagined that workers will be similarly preparing outside their places of work for the coming establishment of socialism. As the May 1966 Socialist Standard quoted in the Guildford circular (para 54) puts it, "when many workers want Socialism they will begin to organise and plan for the rebuilding of society prior to the capture of political power".

5. Guildford argue in favour of another position: that workers should try to bring about "a change in economic relationships between people prior to the formal enactment of socialism" (para 55). By which they mean the conversion of the large market-oriented cooperative sector which they believe (on very weak grounds, as we shall see) will then exist into what amounts to a socialist sector of the economy practising production for use and free distribution alongside the capitalist sector.

6. Guildford don't actually use the words "socialist sector" but it is clear that this is what they are talking about. Their circular says,

with reference to workers' cooperatives, that "gradually over time we can expect to see them progressively gutted of their capitalist content. The corollary of this will be the increasing application of socialist principles in respect of production and consumption" (para 41). Once they have been "gutted of their capitalist content" workers' cooperatives will become "socialistic institutions" (para 45) in the sense that they would have ceased to produce for the market and have begun to produce directly for use, receiving their supplies free from other cooperatives and distributing their products free to users.

7. Guildford go even further and argue that these "socialistic" cooperatives can become a breach-head for an invasion of socialistic relationships within capitalism" (para 44) which will eventually precipitate a "collapse of markets" (para 45). An accompanying diagram of "a possible model for social evolution" shows market-oriented capitalist enterprises being gradually surrounded and eliminated by a growing non-market sector over a caption reading "elements of the market economy are gradually replaced by autonomous enterprises until the market sector is reduced to a size that can be socialised by 'enactment' without causing widespread social disruption".

8. It's a "nice idea", but it simply lacks credibility. Guildford assume, first, that workers' cooperatives will be able to survive in their initial market-oriented stage in the face of competition from traditional capitalist enterprises and, second, that having done this they will then be able to switch from production for sale to production for free distribution and beat capitalist enterprises on this basis too. Both assumptions are quite unrealistic because they ignore the structure and economic laws of the capitalist economy.

9. Guildford's whole gradualist strategy is based on the assumption that the cooperative form of enterprise is in some way inherently "socialistic". But is it? Just like any other enterprise within a capitalist economy, a cooperative is a commercial enterprise engaged in producing for sale with a view to profit. It is true that the internal organisation can be different than in a traditional capitalist enterprise (the management of a cooperative can be organised on a more democratic basis) and also that profits rather than being distributed to shareholders can be shared amongst the members of the cooperative. But these internal differences do not make a cooperative any less subject to the laws of the capitalist economy. A cooperative is just as much subject to competitive pressures to keep costs down and to reinvest most of the profits in new equipment as is any capitalist enterprise, and any management committee, however democratically elected, has to take this into account. In these circumstances the self-administration that the cooperative form does indeed permit becomes "self-exploitation", the workers having to drive themselves just as hard and to restrain their consumption just as much as if they were working in an ordinary capitalist enterprise. In other words, workers in cooperatives are no better off than those in ordinary capitalist enterprises --they may even be worse off since being co-owners of the business they work for they will be less inclined to fight speed-up, etc than they would be if their employer was a private or state capitalist enterprise.

10. Guildford seem to have forgotten that we have already seen the rise and fall of the Cooperative Movement. Robert Owen in the first half of the 19th century also advocated that workers should withdraw from

working for an employer and set up cooperatives organised on "socialistic" lines in the hope that these would eventually be able to replace capitalist enterprises so ushering in the Cooperative Commonwealth (long an alternative name for socialism). This had no chance of succeeding, precisely because cooperative enterprises are inevitably in Guildford's own words "locked into the nexus of capitalist relations" (para 42) and so have to operate on a capitalist basis if they are to have any chance of surviving. Those cooperatives that once claimed to be inspired by the ideas of Robert Owen and to be working towards the establishment of a Cooperative Commonwealth have long since abandoned all such talk and have become more and more capitalist in outlook until they are now virtually indistinguishable from any other capitalist enterprise. Forced to compete in a capitalist economy cooperatives inevitably adapt to capitalist conditions. Guildford's gradualist scheme assumes, against all the evidence, that it will be different next time: that the new workers' cooperative movement they see emerging will be able to defy and overcome the economic laws of capitalism.

11. Guildford also forget that workers' cooperatives can never play more than a marginal role within the capitalist economy. To establish a business under capitalism requires money and it is clear that even a group of as much as a thousand workers (which would be enormous by the standard of today's workers' cooperatives) would not be able to amass enough money to set up anything but a small business by capitalist standards. Workers' cooperatives can thus never extend beyond the level of the small firm. It is true that they can (and do) borrow from the banks, but this does not help Guildford's case because it limits even further their room for manoeuvre as it means they are under additional pressure to make profits so as to be able to pay the interest on these loans, quite apart from the fact that banks are not likely to appreciate the proposed change-over to production for free distribution...

12. So, when a substantial minority of workers become socialists the cooperatives are simply not going to be there to be "gutted of their capitalist content" and converted into "socialistic institutions". Most workplaces will still be in the hands of the state (including schools, hospitals, etc) and of private capitalist enterprises. Perhaps a few cooperatives, amongst those not dependent on the banks, would be able to do what Guildford envisage but this would be a margin of a margin and the effect on economic relationships generally would be minimal. This does not rule out the springing-up of a whole range of socialist associations, clubs and mutual aid groups such as Guildford seem to have partly in mind but neither will these amount to the gradually growing "socialistic" sector of the economy that is central to their "model of social evolution"

13. Even Guildford concede that not all capitalist units "are likely to disappear as a result of the collapse of markets precipitated by the invasion of socialistic relationships", explaining that "in the case of the more firmly entrenched and technically complex capitalist units it will be necessary to bring into play the complementary method of capturing state power in order to legitimise social ownership of these units" (para 45). But, as we have seen, there is every reason to believe that hardly any capitalist units are likely to disappear as a result of being taken over by workers' cooperatives, so that the great bulk of industry will --unfortunately, but inevitably-- continue to be controlled by "firmly entrenched and technically complex capitalist units" right up

until the capture of political power.

14. The plain fact is that at the time we are talking about --when there is a substantial minority but not yet a majority of socialists-- the only possible course of action open to those workers who have become socialists is the one which the SPGB has traditionally envisaged: that workers, in their unions and other organisations, should begin to organise and plan for the rebuilding of society after the capture of political power. Guildford may find this insufficiently imaginative but it is not a question of what is desirable but of what is possible. In any event, even on what they propose it is all that conditions will allow workers in "the more firmly entrenched and technically complex capitalist units" to do.

15. Guildford's gradualist "model for social evolution" having been shown to be both theoretically unsound and lacking in credibility, it follows that their conclusion that arguably socialists "should be encouraging, even participating in the development" of workers' cooperatives (para 47) is also unsound and should be rejected. This doesn't mean that we should necessarily discourage workers' cooperatives, but simply that we should not take up a position in favour of them. Nor does it rule out us contacting people involved in them with a view to discussing with them on the same basis that we contact others who are dissatisfied with the capitalist order of things.

--Adam Buick, Appt A18, 2 rue Jean Engling, L-1466 LUXEMBURG

Dear DB readers,

I'm writing this in reply to Jon Bekken's letter in DB #26, which purports to explain the Libertarian Labor Review group's differences with the Workers Solidarity Alliance. I also want to reply to some of Jeff Stein's comments in DB #27.

Bekken refers to "the IWW's report" of an alleged WSA "slander campaign" against the IWW. He fails to point out that this report was written by Mark Kaufman -- associated with the LLR faction for many years -- when he was General Secretary Treasurer of the IWW. It was never voted on by the IWW membership. This report is mostly a laundry list of various statements of individuals (often taken out of context), not positions or activities endorsed by WSA as an organization. I hardly need to point out that the appropriate way to ascertain what the positions of the WSA are is to look at statements or activities that have actually been endorsed by WSA as an organization, such as our statement of principles ("Where We Stand").

Moreover, most of the statements referred to were made prior to the formation of WSA in November of 1984. Bekken's letter contains an example of this method when he refers to "the WSA's report to the 17th AIT Congress." In fact, the WSA had not yet been formed when the AIT (the syndicalist international) held its 17th Congress. Bekken is actually referring to a report of the Libertarian Workers Group. The LWG was only one of the groups of people who came together to form WSA in November of 1984.

If you look at the statements that are the alleged "slanders" you

will see that they are generally simple statements of opinion. It appears that many of the individuals or groups that participate in the DB would be guilty of "slander," according to the LLR group's definitions. The LLR group seem to be unable to distinguish between disagreement and attack. That's because they lack the concept of reasonable discussion of differences amongst comrades in a diverse movement.

As to revolutionary unionism, the real difference between WSA and the LLR group is not that LLR advocates revolutionary unionism and WSA does not. On the contrary, both groups advocate revolutionary unionism; where we differ is in our ideas about how a new revolutionary unionism might emerge in the USA and what libertarian socialists can do today to help encourage this process.

The appropriate place to go to find the WSA's views on this subject is the WSA statement of principles, which says:

"As the existing unions are not suited to overthrow boss rule, a workers movement that can transform society will be built independently of the existing union hierarchies." But in order for new organizations to emerge, large numbers of workers must begin acting in ways that require a new type of organization. For us, you can't have a revolutionary union movement unless substantial numbers of workers are beginning to act in ways that are revolutionary. We believe that small groups of people with revolutionary ideology don't add up to a genuine revolutionary union movement.

Bekken quotes the LWG 17th AIT Congress report to the effect that "conditions for organizing a revolutionary labor movement in America" do not exist right now. This was an assessment of the immediate situation; but the WSA obviously does not believe that the situation will always remain so unpropitious for our ideas: "As workers move towards more militant action," says the WSA statement, "the creation of organization on a new basis becomes a more realistic possibility, as workers move to take over more direct control of their own struggles."

We believe that it is possible for such initiatives to emerge in a variety of ways -- local unions breaking away, new independent organizations being created, and so on. What we are talking about here are mass organizations, organizations that can provide a framework for the whole workforce to get together to fight the bosses.

New workers organizations could be judged "revolutionary" insofar as they break out of the present institutional limits placed on worker action -- through sympathy strikes, "secondary boycotts," plant takeovers, no no-strike pledges, etc. Such organizations can be said to be "libertarian" insofar as they conduct themselves through such direct action means and are organized non-hierarchically, directly controlled by the rank and file. In other words, the "revolutionary" or "libertarian" character of a workers' organization should be judged by what it is like in practice.

It is not our position that revolutionary unionism can only exist

in "periods of revolutionary crisis," if that means only a situation where the immediate possibility of overthrow of the government is posed. A period of upsurge in worker action and solidarity may see actions that I'd call "revolutionary" long before the movement reaches the point of challenging the bosses for immediate control of society. For example, I would say that the mass sitdown strikes in the USA in the '30s were "revolutionary" even though this country was a long way from an immediate overthrow of the system.

In fact, I would argue that the working class will never arrive at the situation where it has the cohesion and democratic experiences to successfully establish libertarian socialism unless it first has developed its own self-managed movement over a period of some time. A sudden collapse of the current regime, for example, would not automatically lead to workers power if working people have not developed practices of running their own movement and supporting each other. A new elite taking over would be just as likely in such a situation. That is why Bekken is wrong when he attributes to us the council communist idea of a completely spontaneous revolution.

If the word "unionism" is used in the broadest sense, referring to all forms of mass organization formed by people as workers in opposition to the employing class, we would agree with Jon that revolutionary, self-managed unionism is central to anarcho-syndicalism. Indeed, self-managed unionism is advocated by WSA precisely as our strategy for the construction of a self-managed, libertarian socialist society: "Self-managed workers' organizations," says the WSA principles, "such as workplace assemblies, rank-and-file coordinating councils, and unions free of top-down control, are the kind of organization that can be the vehicle for self-emancipation."

In a period when there is a tendency of increasing numbers of workers to form new, independent organizations, we would also expect that there would be a tendency for such organizations to come together in order to have the power and cohesion needed for self-protection and to challenge the government and corporations. Thus, we could expect that a period when new self-managed organizations were emerging could result in the formation of a new mass workers federation.

Since the working class is home to a variety of viewpoints, we expect that a variety of political tendencies will be present within such organizations.

For us this has two important implications:

(1) There must be a separate, ideologically defined organization of anarcho-syndicalists in order to have a means of effectively presenting the case for a libertarian viewpoint amongst our fellow workers since genuine mass organizations will have a diverse membership and we may not always agree with the views that prevail at any given time.

(2) We must try to foster an atmosphere of dialogue and reasonable discussion of differences within the movement in

DISCUSSION BULLETIN

P.O. Box 1564, Grand Rapids, MI 49501

REPORT #28

March 1, 1988

Members of the DB Committee

Dear Comrades:

Perhaps as a result of the appeal for funds in Report #27, receipts were more than twice those of the preceding two-month period. Nevertheless the DB's financial condition continued to deteriorate as you will see below. In part the cause is that few subs come up for renewal in the winter with consequent decline in sub and donation revenues. We also have two annual bills, post office box rent and the non-profit mailing fee, that fall due at this time.

CONTRIBUTIONS

From December 30, 1987, to March 1, 1988, we received the following contributions: Sam Brandon \$7; Steve Hoyle \$15; Monroe Prussack \$27; Glen Johnson \$4; Charles C. Collins \$7; a midwestern subscriber \$7; John Crump \$14.35; Frank Girard \$25; Frank Smith \$20. Total \$126.35. Thank you, comrades.

FINANCES

<u>Balance</u>	December 30, 1987	\$53.03
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Receipts

Contributions	\$126.35
Subs and sales	31.87
total	<u>\$158.22</u>

Disbursements

Post office box rent	\$ 22.00
Printing	100.00
Postage	60.50
Supplies and Post. due	13.46
total	<u>\$195.96</u>

<u>Balance</u>	March 1, 1988	\$15.29
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Fraternally submitted,

Frank Girard
for the DB Committee

order to maintain the unity of a diverse working class. We must rely upon rational persuasion as the way we try to gain acceptance for our views within the movement. The alternative would be manipulation, intimidation and bureaucratic control -- and such methods would be incompatible with our libertarian goals. Such methods imply domination by a few over the rest.

Since we believe that a pluralistic movement must be based upon comradely discussion, we have always taken the position that the various ideas and contributions of revolutionaries over the years -- anarchist, marxist, or whatever -- have to be judged on their merits. Anarchism must not be converted into a religion. It was this open-minded attitude towards marxist contributions that got some of us into trouble with the LLR people when we were in the Anarchist-Communist Federation (ACF) with them back in 1978-81.

However, Stein is incorrect when he says that WSA "borrows its ideology from marxism, council communism, trade union reformism..." The politics of WSA are clearly in the anarcho-syndicalist tradition. But anarcho-syndicalism is not a comprehensive theory of society -- it is a strategy for achieving a libertarian, self-managed society based on production for use.

WSA does not dictate to the individual WSA member what he/she must think on everything. On the assessment of various theories about society and contributions of particular writers or activists (e.g. the assessment of Marx's Capital), it is a matter of individual judgment of the particular WSA member. As such, some members of WSA may have found some of Marx's writings helpful in working out their ideas. And it would be dishonest to deny that there have always been certain mutual influences between the anarchist and marxist communities. There have not been the water-tight compartments that the LLR group imagine. (However, it is inaccurate to say that WSA has "called" for a "synthesis of anarchism and marxism." That is a reference to Mike Harris's description of the evolution of his personal views, stated in a debate with the Revolutionary Socialist League prior to the formation of WSA.)

On the conception of revolutionary unionism, Bekken's group maintain the IWWist conception of combining the educational functions of a political organization with the functions of a mass union organization. In the present-day situation this leads to the idea of ideologically "pure" workplace groups or pre-fab "revolutionary unions," defined in advance by small groups of conscious revolutionaries.

While those of us in WSA also support specifically libertarian or anarcho-syndicalist workplace groups, we recognize that an unavoidably pluralistic workforce requires an open, independent and pluralistic form of association to unite in struggle against the employing class. Thus, small workplace groups that are specifically anarchist can only be part of the picture, and cannot in themselves provide a framework for the struggles of the whole workforce.

On the issue of forming new organizations, outside the AFL-CIO,

Stein says the WSA position has "flip-flopped." But the WSA position on unionism, as stated in "Where We Stand", has not been changed since the WSA was founded in November of 1984. When Stein refers to "the past," I can only surmise that he is referring to statements of individual WSA members made in the course of the debates over the IWW in the ACF.

However, if we go back to the ACF debates in the late '70s, we did not disagree with the IWW simply because it was organizing outside the AFL-CIO framework. The criticism (not "attack") of the IWW that some of us put forward was that it is not possible for a small ideologically-motivated group to form in advance -- and dictate -- the organization of a future, not-yet-existing mass workers movement. We did disagree with Stein's group on their dogmatic rejection of activity within the AFL-CIO local unions, but this was part of a general position that says we can't specify in advance exactly what the trajectory and organizational form of a new workers movement will be, and that we must be open to a variety of directions, including (but not limited to) developments inside local affiliates of the AFL-CIO.

After all, what do we do so long as our co-workers are not prepared to build a new movement outside the framework of the AFL-CIO-type unions? "So long as workers' struggles are organized through the existing unions," says the WSA statement, "we participate in those unions and their struggles." If an AFL-CIO-type union is entrenched in your workplace and you participate in it, alongside your co-workers, are you "infiltrating" that union?

Now, it is true that various leftists who talk about "working within" the AFL-CIO-type unions have in mind participation in, or gaining influence over, the hierarchy. Leftist groups (especially Leninists) often think that the labor movement is to be changed by "changing leadership" at the top rather than thinking in terms of a different type of movement, based on workers' direct action and rank and file self-management of their own organizations. But that "changing leadership" conception is rejected explicitly by WSA: "Since the problem [with the labor movement] does not stem from 'misguided' leadership," says the WSA statement, "we do not seek to change the labor movement through a strategy of electing a different leadership."

Our aim in participating in local unions affiliated to AFL-CIO-type "internationals" should be that of encouraging tendencies towards rank and file initiative and control and increasing independence of the top-down union apparatus. The hierarchy is not the only factor in local union situations, which also include mass events, such as meetings to discuss negotiations, votes on contract proposals, strikes, and so on. It is my opinion that rank and file control of the movement would require building new organizations independent of the AFL-CIO but of course the workers themselves must be prepared to support that direction or it won't happen.

Though we do not object to members of WSA being elected to rank and file positions in AFL-CIO local unions, where they still work in the shop and maintain a democratic relationship to their co-workers who

elected them, we're not interested in competing for control of the hierarchical union apparatus. We want to dismantle that apparatus, not control it.

Though some libertarians may be participating in struggles within the AFL-CIO unions, I believe that at some point the need for breaking from the AFL-CIO-type "international" will be posed. Moreover, the tendency of leftists to regard the AFL-CIO-type unions as sacrosanct has tended to retard the development of new organizations. The failure of radical workers to advocate and encourage the development of an alternative model of how unions might be run is one of the reasons for the serious weakness of the labor movement at the present time. Thus, I think it is important to put forward a conception of a new, libertarian, self-managed unionism, and to work towards developing such organizations outside the framework of the AFL-CIO. And at its 1987 convention the WSA endorsed a position of trying to work with other libertarian workers towards the development of such non-hierarchical workers' organizations.

As I said earlier on, Bekken's group lacks a concept of reasonable and civil discussion in a diverse movement, discussion that respects differences of opinion amongst comrades. I suspect that this reflects their failure to develop a conception of revolutionary unionism that can accommodate the diversity within the working class. If all you have to do is define a pre-fab "revolutionary union" according to your own lights and then (somehow) get the working class to enroll in it, what need is there for rational discussion of differences within the movement?

For a world without bosses,

Tom Wetzel *Tom Wetzel*
c/o WSA San Francisco Group
PO Box 40400
San Francisco, CA 94140

Cont'd from p. 2

ready-to-go speech for the president of the company to deliver a day before the vote. I'm not sure why an employer would want to resist unionization, since a story in the PEOPLE (Feb.27) pointed out that in 1987 workers covered by union contracts received smaller raises than non-union workers. Readers who are interested can write in and borrow our copy.

A note to Esperantist readers of the DB:

The current issue of the WORLD SOCIALIST contains an article on socialism written in Esperanto together with an English language discussion of Esperanto and the socialist movement, which is rather critical of the only worker-Esperanto organization, Sennacieca Asocio Tutmonda (SAT). For a copy send two dollars to World Socialist, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN, England.

fg



D.B.
Grand Rapids

Jan. 5th.

College Farm House,
Mill Lane,
Wellington,
Salop,
TF1 1PR.

Dear Frank

Some of the extreme positions being taken in the LLR/WSA polemic are getting a little absurd, & it is not altogether clear whether both or which faction(s) are to blame.

May - as Sam Dolgoff has unfortunately not written himself to set the record straight - I, (being at present not affiliated to either the IWMA or the IWW, but as a former member, & I would assume future member, of both,) give some history.

In the Fifties & early Sixties, Sam, now a leading member of the LLR & IWW, was a much revered member of the Libertarian League, an IWMA-AIT affiliate, which at that time stood outside the IWW, although it developed increasingly friendly relations.

In the early Sixties, the SWF (the British Section of the IWMA-AIT) & the Libertarian League wrote a special letter to the Industrial Worker and to the IWW Chicago office, appreciating that the IWW was an international in its own right; but stressing the need for international syndicalist unity, anxious to see the IWW, the SAC, the FORA (majority), the NSV, & Revolution Proletarienne merging with the AIT.

Though the reply of the Industrial Worker, which said that the IWW was not an anarcho-syndicalist organization and therefore could not be interested in such a merger, was not fully endorsed by the IWW; it was also not fully repudiated.

Certainly, rightly in my view, the IWW did stress that not all AIT sections were organized on an industrial unionist pattern; and it would be fair to say that in this respect the IWW was insisting on the syndicalist (as distinct from libertarian communist) aspect of anarcho-syndicalism more strongly than did the AIT.

That said it would have been absurd for the British section for instance, (which then only counted its members in two figures,) to have been anything other than a purely propagandist group; and the RP group in France, & the NSV in Holland, both of which were CIO groups and therefore loosely linked to the IWW, were both more insistent than the SWF that premature creation of industrial unions, (without any spontaneous desire for them from the rank & file in the work-places,) would be vanguardist and contrary to anarchism & syndicalism. A view which the Libertarian League endorsed.

After this, at the time of the Libertarian League's winding up to join the IWW, the latter in a publication said, in effect: "Yes it was syndicalist, but that didn't exclude tactical differences with other syndicalists; IWW members were free to remain members of the AIT, (a body for which the IWW had respect,) & free to work for eventual unity; but that the IW did not share the view that there was a pressing need for such unity.

I am aware that in the late Sixties the nature of the IWW changed rapidly. Indeed Seumas Cain led a faction out of it, regarding the IWW as having been taken over by Hippie flower children uninterested in the industrial struggle; (he cooperated with Minnesota ex-SLP members in various industrial unionist caucuses.) Evidently that was a fairly temporary aberration.

While every living movement develops its ideas, & it would be absurd to suggest that either the IWW or the AIT should be expected now to have the same positions they manifested quarter of a century or more ago; no such movement can deny its history.

It is absurd on the one side for LLR to disown the AIT heritage through the Lib. League; for it to paint the IWW as the true repository of the anarcho-syndicalist tradition, (in view of the 1961 IW editorial reply it received;) or it to denounce those who want a synthesis between anarchism and marxism, what does Jeff Stein think Bill Haywood, Vincent St John & Ralph Chaplin wanted then.

On the other hand WSA seems to be shy in explaining just what it believes it can validly retain from its Leninist past (and which sections of its Leninist past) & reconcile with syndicalism. (There have been regrettable vanguardist influences imported into the AIT from the Platformist tradition, influences which marred the CNT in the past; and there is a danger that these would be enlarged by Leninist accretions.)

Nor does Martin Cormack answer the allegation that the WSA's aim is nearer council communism than industrial unionism, by quoting a passage from the AIT's principles which might suggest that this is equally true of the international. Unfortunately, contrary to the views of both factions, it is not as simple as that.

There are two possible readings of the differences, & they are mutually opposed; but both factions slip from talking as if one interpretation is correct, to endorsing the other without noticing the mutual opposition.

It is possible, (and I emphasize possible, I am not stating this as an allegation, I don't know, -) that the WSA is still basically a vanguardist organization; it is drawn to the Platformist-influenced elements of the AIT, and basically still wants a party, though one that professes anarchism and incorporates some anarchist ideas.

It is equally possible, that the WSA really is nearer council communism, - that is that it regards the formation of revolutionary industrial unions, other than in a pre-revolutionary situation, when the working class already has a revolutionary libertarian consciousness, as a vanguardist action, and it sees syndicates as combining the evils of vanguard parties & bureaucratic trade unions, - it is obvious that these are two entirely different positions, and yet both are charged (as deviations from syndicalism) by the same people.

Since council communists are very strongly opposed to dual unions, the major element in Bekker's evidence can point either way.

fraternally
Laurens Otter

October 4
Dear Comrades,

DB25 had articles that made me proud to be a reader and writer for DB. However, now that ideas on how to build the better new social system are in my unconscious mind, I can only think of existence. In fact, a prime condition for my existence is safety from the Soviet Union's feudal system, which no one else mentions in DB. In an attempt to achieve solidarity with most Marxists we have accepted the leftist analysis of the Soviet Union and of other news. In truth the Soviet Union has a form of the feudal system that preceded capitalism while unfortunately many Marxists believe it embodies the social system that will succeed capitalism. DeLeon predicted that with the collapse of capitalism, either feudalism or democratic industrial government would follow. Total control by the state as in Russia would destroy my aspirations for the good life and feudal wars will destroy the world.

For selfish reasons the capitalist class opposes the Soviet Union and its system, but the proletariat can not identify its interests with those of capitalists. The vacuum in advanced thinking today is the inability of Marxists and De Leonists to become committed anti "communists". When the SLP opposes the US involvement in Central America as an attack against the warlike nature of capitalism, it gives the impression that it prefers that the Soviet Union should win there. We should become informed about all aspects of the farce that goes by the noble name of communism and open the door to the

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fellowship with most people around us. We would then be in a better position to offer Marxist-DeLeonist reasoning for the problems constantly being created by capitalism. When our friends, neighbors, and fellow workers get the urge to rebel against capitalist conditions and contradictions, we will be on the spot as individuals and groups to help build the workers' organization for the future. Our knowledge is power only if we use it skillfully which requires wisdom.

Fraternally,
Monroe Prussack

January 8

Dear Comrades,

After laboring through Donald Busky's article about direct democracy. I have a greater appreciation for the genius of Daniel De Leon. For almost fifty years I have been enchanted by DeLeonism because he clearly tells people "where is the beef." Being a DeLeonist makes me believe I am a man because I consistently fight the insecurity, destruction of the environment, prejudice, and wars that result from outmoded capitalism and other forms of class rule. On the other hand, the ideas of Rousseau on direct democracy do not interest me because I do not have the time or patience to participate in voting on many things directly that are mostly of a trivial nature.

My experience as a stockholder in large corporations makes me aware that representative democracy is an effective way to run a business for the benefit of the owners. At the annual meeting of stockholders the elected officers and their policies can be openly questioned by anybody there and the best interests of the shareholders upheld. Why can not socially owned industry be run for the owners' benefit like private industry is?

Above all, it is my belief in the basic intelligence and nobility of mankind that makes me accept De Leon's program including representative industrial democracy. Our common sense of decency gets us to support DeLeonism because we believe as did De Leon that industrial feudalism is the other choice if we do not make De Leon's program succeed. Common sense tells us Marxists that capitalism is by its nature subject to business collapse while the planned economy of industrial feudalism can last for centuries. If the working class does not perform its historic mission when capitalism is obviously on its back, it will welcome an order of terror and international turmoil. De Leon predicted that capitalism sets the stage for a classless society of cooperation and peace as well as for industrial feudalism that Russia and China already have. Rest assured that when all the industrial countries have industrial feudalism all remaining hope and decency that exists in the world will vanish because terror and war alone will support class rule. Even Russia and China will get more brutal because there will be no more competition with capitalism for them.

Monroe Prussack

February 3

Dear Discussion Bulletin,

The People's reply to the January Fortune article about "the death of socialism" seemed inadequate to me. There is no disagreement that Fortune likes to describe the Soviet Union as socialist and on

that basis discredit socialism in general. Perhaps one reason Fortune calls the Soviet Union socialist is because members of the Communist Party which includes the ruling elite are professed Marxian socialists. From that premise the average person would conclude that those socialists surely have created socialism where they have the power and influence. No matter if they approve or not most people agree that the "communist" elite are dedicated and sincere and would approach all limits to uphold and defend their way of life. Since I can remember, the People has used a negative approach to the Soviet Union by simply saying it has bureaucratic despotism. Surely the leaders of the Soviet Union are aware of this but they continue to honor Marx and defend against capitalist encroachments.

An improvement of the People's understanding would be to declare what the social system of the Soviet Union is. It surely can not be called bureaucratic state despotism because all capitalist countries have bureaucratic states that are despotic in varying degrees. By its nature the state cannot carry on the function of society which is done by the people to fulfill their needs and desires. The production in a capitalist country is done in private industry for the most part. Likewise production in the Soviet union is done in nationalized industry directed by central planning for the most part. The masses in the Soviet Union do not have the freedom and political right we have in this country and in that respect they can be considered to be serfs compared to the wage slaves of capitalist countries. If you agree that people who are kept down by being deprived of free expression and a free ballot are serfs, then the lords must be the members of the Communist Party who are meant to look after the people and the country as well as the world. Until a better expression is devised, I prefer to call the Russian social system industrial feudalism or centralized feudalism. The People should decide to get on the same wave length as most people and declare what the social system in Russia is rather than what it is not. The victory of the Soviet Union in World War II demonstrated that their ruling elite is capable of bravery and resourcefulness of the knights and lords of feudal society during the middle ages.

Fraternally,
Monroe Prussack

ATTENTION DELEONISTS:

The University of Manchester [England] Press has commissioned Steve Coleman, an occasional contributor to the pages of the DB, to write a political biography of Daniel De Leon for its "Biography of the Left" series. Comrade Coleman is completing the process of gathering material for the book and is eager for suggestions about content and for leads on additional sources he should consult. Scheduled for publication late in 1989, this biography will differ from the two earlier attempts at a book-length political biography in having an author who is sympathetic to many of De Leon's ideas. Interested readers can write to Comrade Coleman at 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN, England.

fg

Dear Frank

College Farm House
Mill Lane
Wellington
Salop. TF1 1PR

While agreeing with the broad thrust of your comments on the Wildcat booklet/reprints of Solidarity, there are six criticisms of it I would like to make.

It may seem a small matter to have not mentioned all mention of George Plume (Harper), dethroning him from his editorial position, - presumably through embarrassment at George's subsequent political evolution, - but in a pamphlet with the sub-title "revolutionary opposition to the second world war" to fail to mention that at the end of that war, when the state was prosecuting opponents of the war for subversion or treason, the death penalty was requested for only two people, one of which - George - being described in the charge as editor of Solidarity; & to fail totally to mention, quote or refer to him seems a bit excessive.

George's movement to the Right after the war was certainly illogical, (though not as definite as the fact that he was a Tory Councillor might suggest,) & it used to seem particularly so that he justified it by referring to the lack of solidarity he received when he was tried; (if the Left fail to defend you, why turn to the Right who kicked you;) but to pursue that lack of Solidarity forty odd years later is as illogical.

..

The APCF's whole history was rather more complex than you gathered or Wildcat said. Here as in the States there was considerable manoeuvring before the Communist Party was set up, with many small groups that supported the Soviet Revolution being left outside. Here this included that part of the SLP that didn't vote to wind up the SLP & join the C.P.; John Maclean - whom Lenin had appointed Bolshevik Ambassador here; Sylvia Panikurst & other big names. These attempted to form a rival Communist Party, but when Lenin disapproved, some submitted, & the rest fell apart. (The mechanics of this are described in a paper by Bob Jones, 6 Lillian St., Bradford.) Basically the APCF were those who still wanted unity after the

The letter from Bob Rossi in DB 26 was indeed thoughtful and honest. My personal thanks to Comrade Rossi for his feelings. His letter was, from my viewpoint, most likely the most important letter to be printed in the DB in sometime, to say the least. While I'm not about to quit the W.S.A. or to work in any electoralist organization, most of his letter has a great deal to say to us all. Being as young as I still am, I will take heed and see his letter as a sort of 'warning'. For sometime I've been working at creating a real balance in my life. This is very important--esp. for activists. There are a great many things I feel the need to do with my life; there are political aspects (membership in W.S.A.), economic aspects (survival, working for a living, ect.) and more social aspects (having a good time, fucking around...). There is also education, health, romance and a multitude of other concerns and desires to balance. To over feed one responsibility or desire while starving another only hurts yourself. Being aware individuals gives us a great deal of responsibility, yet it is not just up to us to shoulder the burden of saving the world, that has got to be a collective effort on the

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Dear Fellow Workers,

constituent revolutionary organizations fell away; but by the time it was founded it was already in conflict with the Communist International. Disagreements on strategy in the West were the reason for the unity talks that led to its formation; but it did not need the APCF to be influenced by Continental Left Communists, most of its founders had had an history of involvement in quasi-syndicalist or proto-councilist movements in Britain during the War, and had been precursors of the council communists in the theoretical field.

Nor is it only the beginning of the APCF's history that the pamphlet oversimplifies. It does explain that the APCF changed its name during the war to the Revolutionary Workers' League, but it continues to use the old name throughout as if this was an incidental factor of no significance. It does mention that the paper Solidarity was only launched in the late 30s, and that at that stage (& two years earlier) the APCF was collaborating with the "Freedom Group" (an anarchist group, with which the APCF subsequently merged,) but it does not mention that Solidarity was from its inception a joint paper, - printed below cost by the Freedom Group, - & that the merger was only thought necessary when a third component came on the scenes.

..

I suggest this oversimplification of history is designed to allow an over-stress on the differences between the marxist & anarchist components of the APCF. There was certainly a curious stage of APCF history when the federation forbade some of its "marxist" members to speak on the federation's platform; but while an anarchist component left the APCF to form the Glasgow Anarchist-Communist Federation, not all those who considered themselves anarchist left, & it is at least arguable that that split, (as also the subsequent divide between those in the Glasgow ACF who became the Glasgow section of the Anarchist Federation of Britain, & those who joined the Freedom Group & RWL,) owed more to personalities, than to theory. While a secession from the APCF to the Freedom Group, before the general unity, was largely occasioned by the fact that Freedom had been joined by Humphreys, a printer with his own print shop, & so (after a lapse, due to Tom Keble's earlier breach with the group,) was able to publish a public paper.

part of the whole human race. We try. We succeed and we fail, 21
but we continue to try. Rossi also made mention of the social
life he enjoys with his neighbors--I also feel that this is
very important. To thoroughly influence someone you might just
have to be good friends with them. I'm sure other readers of
the DB might realise this, who among the 'common men' will
want to talk about any sort of revolutionary change with a
stranger? Change needs mutual trust and an understanding of
everyday needs.

Being a small time Anarcho-Syndicalist propagandist, Mike
Gunderloy's letter in DB 25 hits hard, but it is nonetheless
the truth. My scraps of paper compete for telephone poll space
with right-wing propagandists and odd-ball loonie Religionists.
A very few of the 'average joes' take notice at all. The S.L.P.
has got about a dozen newsstands in town too, always filled
to the brim with the latest issue of The People and they don't
sell too many--if any at all. It's not that the working class
doesn't care-- they're just asleep at the moment RIGHT? I
dunno, I'm not expert on how to wake 'em up, but I will con-
tinue to try.

FOR LIBERTARIAN COMMUNISM,

Rik

Rik Winslow
P.O. Box 41363
Sacramento, CA
95841

Six members of the CNT trade union in Vitoria, capital city of the Basque country, have finally received the dates for their trial, 4 years after they were arrested. The trials will be on:

OCTOBER 28th and DECEMBER 1st, at THE AUDIENCIA NACIONAL,
C/ GARCIA GUTIERREZ, MADRID, AT 10.30 am

*** STOP PRESS: Average sentence on 28.11.87. - 12 months.***

The six accused are: GUILLERMO GUERRERO, SANTIAGO ABAD, VICENTE ALVARADO,
JOSE COLLADO, GUILLERMO ARGOS and ANDRES SANCHEZ

The first four worked at Michelin until their arrest and the last two were at Explosivos Rio Tinto and Canon, respectively. All six are outstanding militants of the CNT in Vitoria.

At the first trial the prosecution is asking for sentences totaling 50 years on charges of arson, hold-ups and menacing scabs at the factory. At the second the charge is attempted assassination of Sr Casanova Salazar, Chief of personnel at Michelin and the sentences could total 105 years in jail.

The only evidence against them is confessions signed by the six when they were held incommunicado for from 7 to 9 days under Spain's draconian 'anti-terrorist' laws. Under

McDougall - who as much as anyone was representative of the APCF Marxists - like Pannekoek (after 1922) insisted that he was making a synthesis of anarchism & Marxism; & Wildcat does no service to his memory by trying to rebuild a barrier between the two components. Particularly when they trot out the hoary old Leninist myth that because anarchists want to destroy the state, that this means that they merely ignore it and so are in fact less anti-statist than those who merely wish to capture it for their own ends.

..

Wildcat (page 8) says of the SPGB that its members if elected will abstain from Parliament. That tactic (known in Britain in the 1920s as the Sinn Fein tactic) was in fact the founding position of the APCF, and - until Aldred's death - was kept alive by the USM. It was not, & I believe, is not still, the position of the SPGB, which is that their M.P.s when elected would vote on capitalist issues on their merits, until such time as the SPGB has a majority.

Trivial though this error is, it allows Wildcat to skate over the fact that from its inception the APCF recruited those "Impossibilists" who rejected involvement in parliamentary voting. Though the SPGB "Provisional Committee" which had left the SPGB before World War I on this issue did not merge into the RWL.

..

Wildcat states that council communists have always accepted the need for a transitional state, & elsewhere that the APCF always did. In fact I can remember in the 50s, & (I think) in the 60s, decided arguments between French councilist groups on this matter; and I believe the argument started much earlier. Partly there is a semantic confusion, between The State, ergo a Transitional State, & a state or stage of being in transition. Partly there is doubt as to how a state is defined. Was The Commune a state? Were the early Soviets? Was the Kronstadt Commune? Were the German workers' councils of 1919-21? the North Italian syndicalist councils of 1921-2? the Arroganese peasant communes of 36-7?

If the answer to all of these is yes, (and it can be argued that it should be,) then all council communists, and indeed, possibly all anarchists, ^{except Stinerites,} in that measure sanction

this law, which was strengthened by the 'socialist' PSOE government, around 150 people a month are arrested in the Basque Country, though only about 10% of these are ever brought to trial. During their detention the six were subjected to torture such as thumping and kicking, or having bags full of asphyxiating spray put over their heads, as well as threats to their families. They confirmed their confessions when taken to Madrid as they were still disorientated and under threat, but all six immediately renounced them on their release and have continue to do so despite attempts to intimidate them further, eg one of them was attacked in the street by 3 police agents acting incognito. Attempting to prove these tortures is virtually impossible because of the 'professional' way in which they were inflicted and the use of anti-inflammatory creams. -

The charges go back to events which took place in 1979/80 when Michelin refused to negotiate a collective agreement with the unions at its four Spanish factories and began trying to impose new working practices, specifically the 4 teams system (see sinews no.4). This led to a series of strikes and violent confrontations with scabs, organised in a 'non affiliated union' and there were casualties on both sides. Eventually an agreement was signed which was favourable to the workforce. Before this, in February '79, a director of Michelin was kidnapped by ETA, but released when the Works Committee at Vitocia (on which the CNT was the major union) publically asked them to. On the 16th of May San Salazar was attacked and seriously wounded. This is the main crime which the 6 have been accused of, in league with two others. Vicente Senar and Enrique Cases, the

transitional states as necessary evils. But in so far as Wildcat is distinguishing the councillist position from the syndicalist &/or Impossibilist one; then there is no such unity amongst councillists.

Certainly organizations retaining some state forms, which - if one is being pedantic - can be described as some form of transitional state, will emerge as the organs of workers' power in any revolutionary situation. Certainly the passage to complete socialism will make these very organs of workers' power unnecessary, (and indeed, if they existed too long, their role would be anti-socialist.) But to equate workers' councils (whether or not organized in industrial unions) with transitional states is to confuse not to clarify.

..

Wildcat, talking of Spain, assumes that British anarchists were uncritical of the CNT-FAI, & particularly of its ministers. Yet they reproduce an article from the Friends of Durruti, which mentions that attempts had been made to expel them from the CNT. I cannot now recall seeing earlier copies of Solidarity with articles from these Friends, & it is possible that the APCF hadn't earlier made criticisms; but Aldred had constantly through the civil war reproduced their arguments.

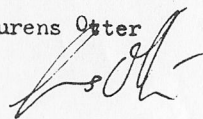
The suggestion that the Bilan group was in some way unique in its criticisms is just nonsensical. Perfectly orthodox Leninists - like Oehler and Meinov - were insisting that even critical support of the CNT-FAI-POUM leadership amounted to betrayal. Similar divisions were to be found amongst anarchist and councillist groups everywhere.

..

It is a pity that a good book is marred in this way by mistakes that if accidental show remarkable carelessness, and if deliberate, suggest doubtful honesty.

fraternally

Laurens Otter



DISCUSSION BULLETIN
IUCE, P.O. Box 1564
Grand Rapids, MI 49501

Address Correction
Requested

AIR MAIL



Adam Buick R30
Appt. A18
2 rue Jean Engling
L-1466 Luxemburg, Europe

latter an ex member of the CNT presently serving 53 years for a previous assassination.

It is significant that the six were arrested in '84 when the CNT was experiencing a renewed growth in Alava, the region around Vitoria, and have finally been brought to trial at the time of the CNT's tenth congress thus dashing plans to transfer the unions national committee to Vitoria. 75% of the original charges have been dropped (including one of holding up a savings bank which it turned out had never actually been held up) and the six have been put at provisional liberty which is unknown for charges of this seriousness. Above all the fact that nothing incriminating was ever found in searches of the accused houses and that the prosecution has to rely completely on confessions, strongly suggests that this is a case of framing trade unionists in an attempt to destroy effective, militant and genuinely democratic organisation by the workers at the region's largest factory.

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